

Transforming Schools Toolkit

Worksheet 3d: Policy Direction and Examples

School boards should adopt, revise, and rewrite clear, up-to date, and in compliance with the school district's strategic plan, state constitution, state and federal state board requirements.

Excerpt from National Association of School Psychologists

Creating trauma-sensitive schools requires a shift in policy and in practice. In addition to implementing multi-tiered systems of support.

NASP recognizes that policies can

- 1) Prioritize efforts to create safe and supportive school environments
- 2) Support funds to integrate social–emotional learning into the curriculum
- 3) Adopt positive discipline and restorative justice practices
- 4) Require ongoing professional development, particularly related to toxic stress, adversity, and trauma
- 5) Improve access to school mental and behavioral health services

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) provides significant opportunity to increase access to comprehensive school mental and behavioral health services, and it expands local control over decision making to address specific issues, such as trauma. · Title IV Part A: Student Support and Academic Enhancement Grants (SSAEG) are a flexible block grant authorized at \$1.6 billion. · Specialized instructional support personnel (SISP) must be involved in the development of district plans and applications for these funds, which must include a needs assessment in three key areas: (a) access to and opportunities for a well-rounded education, (b) safe and supportive conditions for learning, and (c) access to personalized learning experiences supported by technology. · Districts must use at least 20% of SSAEG funds to improve student mental and behavioral health, school climate, or school safety, which include trauma-informed policies and practices.

Nome Strategic Equity Framework

<https://www.nomeschools.org/site/handlers/filedownload.ashx?moduleinstanceid=718&dataid=805&FileName=17.pdf>

Oakland Unified School District

The Oakland Unified School District's discipline policy⁸ is an example of a policy developed through a trauma-engaged lens. In the excerpts below, note the emphasis on positive discipline, equity, staff training, and avoiding missed school.

The Board desires the use of a positive approach to student behavior and the use of preventative and restorative practices to minimize the need for discipline and maximize

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instructional time for every student.

The Board desires to identify and address the causes of disproportionate treatment in discipline to reduce and eliminate the racial disparities in the use of punitive school discipline, and any other disparities that may exist for other under-served populations.

The Board recognizes the importance of using school and classroom management strategies that keep students in school and in the classroom.

[With limited exceptions] an administrator or administrator's designee may only impose in-school and out-of-school suspension when other means of correction fail to bring about proper conduct or the student's presence causes a danger to persons.

Other means of correction include, but are not limited to, conferences with students and their parents/guardians; use of student study teams or other intervention related teams; enrollment in a program teaching social/emotional behavior or anger management; participation in a restorative justice program or restorative circles; and positive behavior support approaches.

The Superintendent or designee shall provide professional development as necessary to assist staff in developing consistent classroom management skills, implementing effective disciplinary techniques, eliminating unconscious bias, and establishing cooperative relationships with parents/guardians.

To ensure that discipline is appropriate and equitable, schools and the District shall collect and review discipline data that is disaggregated by school, race, gender, status as an English Language Learner, status as a student with a disability and type of infraction on a monthly basis.

AASB policy recommendations: For specific policies contact your school district to access policy on-line recommendations and instructions. General school district policy categories impacted include:

- Attendance
- Discipline
- School climate
- Social and emotional learning
- Philosophies including awareness of Adverse Childhood Experiences and trauma
- Multicultural education
- Partnerships with tribes
- Instruction and curriculum
- Community relationships
- Professional development
- Crisis response
- Multiple measures of student learning

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Excerpt from National Center from Safe Supportive Learning Environments

Trauma-sensitive schools establish policies and procedures that align with trauma sensitivity, which include policies related to discipline practices, communication with students and families, and safety procedures. Policies and practices are reviewed regularly to ensure alignment with the mission and goals of a trauma-sensitive school. Schools look to eliminate practices, such as the following, that could re-traumatize students and families:

- Rigid, punishment-driven environments
- Harsh discipline practices that mimic abusive experiences for youth
- Crisis intervention practices or emergency procedures that further traumatize students
- Communication with parents and community partners that disregards student and family privacy and confidentiality
- Disrespectful treatment of students and families
- Diminished student and family voice
- Policies that minimize choice and control
- Seclusion and restraint

Discipline

For students affected by trauma, traditional school discipline practices that include harsh language, negative interactions, and removal from the community may mimic traumatic experiences, trigger trauma-related responses, and reinforce the belief that adults are not predictably safe and trustworthy.

Guiding questions

1. What is our primary approach to discipline?
2. How effective is this approach for students exposed to trauma?
3. How does our approach to discipline align with the core principles of trauma sensitivity (i.e., trauma awareness; safety; choice, control, and empowerment; relationship driven; culturally competent; collaborative; holistic)?
4. How do our discipline policies and practices facilitate or hinder student, family, and staff well-being? For example, are there practices that could be re-traumatizing to students and families?
5. Who is involved in developing discipline policies and procedures?
6. What do we need to do differently to ensure a trauma-sensitive approach?